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## Monumental

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## Monumental

Daniel Graham

Let it be said first that I have no regrets. I feel sadness and joy just as anyone does. The only difference between myself and you is that I deal with the sadness differently.

I've killed men. These men needed to die. That doesn't mean, however, that they were not good men. Better men than I. They've never seen my face, but I have seen theirs; albeit only after they've departed.

Never have I seen a more accusing gaze than that of a dead man. He does not blink, and his pupils don't focus on my own, and still he stares all the same. He does not question. He knows the reason for his death. He walked a different road than me, but is that a valid reason for him to disappear, body and soul? No matter how different they may be from me, and no matter how contradictory our ideals are, no one deserves to leave this world in obscurity. No man deserves to disappear without closure. And yet it happens, and I am responsible. Something compels me that justice be done, and the only one there to see to it is me.

So they are preserved, fragmented as they are, in my mind. They have their lovers and children, as I do. Wives and kids that one day will wonder why their father hasn't returned, as I one day will not.

I am a collage of testaments to nameless men that died in silence, denied even the surge of DMT to the brain before death. Their souls have been stripped down and added to my own—a wall of faces every time I close my eyes. They will persist as long as I do, and I will repay their lives so savagely taken by giving my silent remembrance. In doing this I know I have lost a part of myself, but that is my price, and I accept it. In time it will drive my wife and daughter away and I will die not a man, soldier, husband, or father, but a monument.

## Football

Wilda Morris

The doctor tossed the new football into Mother's arms. She sighed and named it Ross. Had Father been on the playing field, she would have passed the football to him, but he was out drinking, drowning the sting of failure and the pain of another birth, another ball to stuff, to keep sewed up, to dress in cowhide or cotton.

Alcohol coached the family team. Rage quarterbacked. One day Mother stormed off the field. Father punted Ross and the older balls down Main Street and headed out of town. *Not a smooth pass*, Aunt complained. *But then, he never did play fair.*

When finally Ross was no longer someone else's football, he kept Alcohol as his coach, Rage as quarterback. All females were footballs to him, easily tossed aside. One touchdown and he wanted a new ball, fresh, unused. One without new little footballs. He had learned the game well.